



galerie **leonard**
& **bina**
ellen
art gallery

EXHIBITION FINAL REPORT
TRAFFIC: CONCEPTUAL ART IN CANADA 1965-1980, PART 1
JANUARY 13 – FEBRUARY 25, 2012

CURATORS:
MICHÈLE THÉRIAULT AND VINCENT BONIN (MONTRÉAL)
BARBARA FISCHER (TORONTO, GUELPH, LONDON)



Installation view of *Traffic* at the Ellen Gallery, Montreal section, 2012
Photo: Paul Litherland

EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING YEAR 2011-2012

EXHIBITION TITLE: *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980, Part 1*

CURATORS: Barbara Fischer (Toronto, London, Guelph); Michèle Thériault with Vincent Bonin (Montréal)

EXHIBITION DATES: January 13-February 25, 2012

EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION:

Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980 was organised and circulated by the Art Gallery of Alberta, The Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (University of Toronto), and the Vancouver Art Gallery, in partnership with the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery (Concordia University), and Halifax Ink.

Featuring hundreds of artworks and archival documents, the travelling exhibition *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980* was presented in Montreal after stops in Toronto (September-November 2010), Halifax (March-May 2011), and Edmonton (June-September 2011). Presented in two parts at the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery in 2012, the first section focused on conceptual art in Montreal, Toronto, London, and Guelph from January 13 to February 25, while the second section was devoted to Halifax, Vancouver, the Prairies, and the Arctic, was presented in March.

In the past decade, the global impact of conceptual art has been the subject of numerous historical studies and exhibitions. Its various manifestations in Canada, however, have remained a limited concern. *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980* is the first major exhibition to track the influence and diversity of conceptual art across Canada, bringing together works by over 70 artists who participated locally in this international phenomenon.

Conceptual art practices in Montréal cannot be dissociated from the political, social, and cultural turmoil of the time, marked by the modernization of state institutions, the democratization of culture, and francophone Québec's project of national sovereignty. Many of the most prominent practitioners of conceptual art were anglophone (Tom Dean, Suzy Lake, Bill Vazan), however francophone artists (Rober Racine, Françoise Sullivan, Serge Tousignant) were equally drawn to dematerialized, interdisciplinary, and experimental approach to art-making, as an alternate way to inscribe themselves in Québec's program of cultural modernization.

Throughout the 60s and 70s, Toronto's arts scene witnessed the emergence of such vibrant countercultural institutions and collectives as the University of Toronto's Rochdale College, Art Metropole, and General Idea. Artistic initiatives

of this period embodied a pervasive desire to link geographically distant places, establish social networks, and develop artistic communities, while commenting on the complexities of technological optimism and the conundrums of administrative realities. With works by artists Ian Carr-Harris, Condé/Beveridge, Vera Frenkel, Michael Snow, Joyce Wieland.

EVENTS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMMING:

- **January 13, 2012, 5:30 pm – 9 pm:** Opening and Reception

The opening was followed by a reception as part of the Gallery's 20-year anniversary of its current identity and the 50th year anniversary of its Permanent Collection.

- **January 14, 2012 at 3 pm:** Tour of the Ontario section of *Traffic* with curator Barbara Fischer

- **January 28, 2012 at 3 pm:** Tour of the Montréal section with curators Michèle Thériault and Vincent Bonin

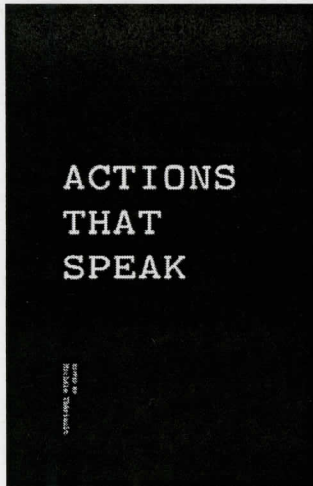
- **Lecture Series:**

In tandem with Part 1 of *Traffic*, Ellen Gallery presented a lecture series providing social, political, and cultural context for conceptual art practices in Montreal.

- Jan. 18, 2012: Sean Mills (Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, University of Toronto), "Alternative Imaginings: Montreal in the 1960s,"
In tandem with the publication launch for *Actions that Speak*
- Jan. 25, 2012: Johanne Sloan (Associate Professor, Dept. of Art History, Concordia University), "Conceptual Art Meets Urban Attitude: Melvin Charney and the 1972 Exhibition *Montréal plus ou moins ?*"
- Feb. 1, 2012: Adam Welch (Ph.D. Candidate, Dept. of Art History, University of Toronto), "Boundary Disputes: Canadian and American Art around Conceptualism."
- Feb. 8, 2012: Jean-Philippe Warren (Associate Professor, Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, Concordia University), "Les hippies québécois : Tendances locales d'un phénomène global."

See **Annex A** for attendance statistics for all events and public programs.

PUBLICATION:



Actions that Speak
Edited by Michèle Thériault
Essays by Sean Mills, Felicity Tayler, Michèle Thériault,
Jean-Philippe Warren
Design by TagTeam Studio
In French and English
January 2012, Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery
258 pp., paper, perfect binding
ISBN 978-2-920394-89-6

Providing additional sociocultural context to the Montreal section of *Traffic*, the Ellen Gallery published *Actions that Speak*, a bilingual publication that examines various aspects of Quebec of the 1960s and 70s.

Actions that Speak presents essays by Sean Mills, Felicity Tayler, Michèle Thériault and Jean-Philippe Warren that convey processes of doing, thinking, and engaging oneself that contributed to redefining and reshaping Quebec society in the 1960s and 1970s. They reveal a *will to speak* and *to act* that distinguished both the community life and the artistic activity of this period, thus encouraging us to consider the present in terms of the complex density of that past.

Historian Sean Mills examines the linguistic debate in Quebec in the late 1960s from the perspective of the political economy of empire in which questions of colonialism and capitalism were important forces. Felicity Tayler presents an analysis of the history and performativity of *Québec underground, 1962-1972*, a three-volume publication that attempted to circumscribe the alternative and, for the most part, collective art practices of the 1960s in Montreal. Michèle Thériault offers an initial reflection on the interventionist nature of the curatorial practice of Norman Thériault, a leading figure in the artistic landscape of the 1970s. The collection concludes with an examination of Quebec's neo-rural communal counterculture by sociologist Jean-Philippe Warren.

This publication is distributed at the Ellen Gallery and via its website (http://ellengallery.concordia.ca/en/publications_actionsthatsspeak.php) as well as Édipresse (<http://www.edipresse.ca/pages/diffuses.html>).

DIDACTIC MATERIALS

▪ **Wall Texts**

Descriptive labels on the wall were presented on the wall in English. French translation of the label texts were presented in stapled documents and made available to the public. Gallery visitors could walk around the exhibition and consult their document if necessary.

▪ **Tabloid**

Within the framework of the exhibition *Traffic*, the Ellen Gallery produced a bilingual tabloid that featured the curatorial wall texts for each featured city or region in the exhibition. It also presented lists of all of the featured artists (by region) as well as a selection of images of key works from the exhibition. Finally, it included an insert of all public programs offered in conjunction with *Traffic*. It was designed by artist Micah Lexier in collaboration with Emmelyne Pornillos. Offered free of charge to all visitors. About **900** tabloids were distributed.

▪ **Ways of Thinking**

Curatorial texts for each section of *Traffic* in addition to a bibliography for each city or region are also available on the Gallery's website in the section *Ways of Thinking/Pistes de réflexions* (in French and English).

http://ellengallery.concordia.ca/en/reflexion_traffic.php

▪ **Reading Room**

Research material used to develop the Montreal section of *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980* was made available for consultation in the gallery's reading room.

PRESS REVIEW

Print and Online:

Charlotte Biron, "Trafic intelligent," *Quartier libre* vol. 19, no. 11. (8 February 2012): 22.

Chrystal Chan, "Conceptual Canadians," *Montreal Mirror* (19 January 2012).
<http://www.montrealmirror.com/wp/2012/01/19/28644/>

Marie-Ève Charron, "L'art et ses systèmes," *Le Devoir* (28 January 2012).
<http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/arts-visuels/341247/l-art-et-ses-systemes>

Jérôme Delgado, "L'homme de toutes les histoires," *Le Devoir* (Saturday and Sunday, 4 - 5 February 2012).

Victoria Lessard, "Culture, A hitchhiker's guide to galleries," *The McGill Daily*, 8 February 2012.

Nicolas Mavrikakis, "L'intelligence à l'œuvre," *Voir* (19 January 2012).
<http://voir.ca/arts-visuels/2012/01/19/trafic-lintelligence-a-loeuvre/>

Nicolas Mavrikakis, "Expos à contenu," *Voir* [blog] (12 January 2012).

Rebecca Ugolini, "Trafficking through Time," *The Concordian* (24 January, 2012).
<http://theconcordian.com/2012/01/24/trafficking-through-time/>

"La une!", *Le vadrouilleur urbain* [blog], 4 February 2012.
<http://levadrouilleururbain.wordpress.com/2012/02/04/sous-la-neige-sale-la-plage-pardamien-fiere-opinion/>

"Trafic : l'art conceptuel au Canada 1965 – 1980 @ galerie Leonard and Bina Ellen de l'Université Concordia," *Un show de motards* [blog] (1 February 2012). <http://www.unshowdemotarts.net/?p=3647>

Johanne Sloan lecture
<http://levadrouilleururbain.wordpress.com/2012/01/21/conference-lecture-johanne-sloangalerie-leonard-bina-ellen/>

Radio:

Interview with Michèle Thériault, "Desautels," Radio-Canada, broadcast on 23 January 2012.

Interview with Michèle Thériault, capsule on *Traffic* broadcast on 31 January 2012 on 89.3 FM CISM from 10:30 and 12 noon on "Un Show de Mot'Arts."

Esther Bourdage, CKUT, 10 February 2012.

DOCUMENTATION: Digital installation images by Paul Litherland/Studio Lux,
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ANNEX A

Attendance figures:

Exhibition Dates: January 14 to February 25, 2012

Number of days open to the public: 30

Total exhibition attendance (excluding events and gallery tours): 2184

Total exhibition attendance (including events and gallery tours): 3103

Events:

January 13, 5:30 – 9 pm: Opening and Reception 202

January 14, 3 pm: Tour of the Ontario section of *Traffic* with curator Barbara Fischer 39

January 18, 6 pm: Lecture by Sean Mills and book launch (*Actions that Speak*) 65

January 25, 6 pm: Lecture by Johanne Sloan 87

January 28, 3 pm: Tour of the Montréal section with curators Michèle Thériault & Vincent Bonin 48

February 1, 6 pm: Lecture by Adam Welch 33

February 8, 6 pm: Lecture by Jean-Philippe Warren 51

Total event attendance 524

Tours

BOOKED TOURS: Dialogue-based tours were offered for this exhibition. The touring strategy was developed to help visitors reflect upon various issues raised by the exhibition. All group tours by Marina Polosa.

January 18, 11:30 am 19
1st year Studio Arts, Concordia University

January 19, 3 pm 12
Graduate Students Association

January 24, 2:15 pm FFAR students (Faculty of Fine Arts), Concordia University	95
January 25, 1:30 pm Intro Video students, Concordia University	18
January 26, 11:30 am Audience: Intro Video students, Concordia University	18
January 30, 4 pm 2 nd /3 rd year Studio Arts (Video), Concordia University	18
February 2nd, 3 pm CÉGEP students (Renaissance to 20 th Century Art History), Dawson College	38
February 7, 3 pm CÉGEP students(1 st year CALL Program), Dawson College	27
February 15, 3:30 pm Intro Video students, Concordia University	32
February 15, 2 pm Anglophone guides/volunteers, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal *with introduction by Michèle Thériault	26
February 17, 2 pm Francophone guides/volunteers, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal	25
February 22, 3 pm CÉGEP students, first year	25
Total booked tour participants:	353
Bilingual Walk-in Tours: For the general public on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 - 2:30 pm. Total walk-in tour participants:	42
Total tour attendance	395